

Character Class

Warmages with Class

By Skip Williams



This column aims to provide players with tips on creating effective and interesting characters of various types. So whether you're a beginning player creating your very first character or an experienced gamer looking to put some punch into an old standby, this column is for you!

The Pros and Cons of a Warmage

Warmages have no use for subtle spells, and even their magical training relies more on brute force than on careful mental work. A warmage excels at only one thing: dealing large amounts of damage quickly. Fortunately, it's tough to go wrong when you have that ability.

Warmage Assets

When you choose a warmage, you gain access to a fixed list of spells that damage, kill, confuse, or debilitate creatures. You have a limited ability to change the spell list, plus a few extra tricks up your sleeve as well. Below are several assets you have going for you when you choose a warmage.

- **Spells:** The warmage spell list doesn't have much breadth, but it includes attack spells that can hurt almost any kind of foe.
- **Spontaneous Spellcasting:** A warmage doesn't have a spellbook, but neither does he choose a personal repertoire of spells -- he knows every spell on the warmage spell list. He does have a daily limit on the number of spells of each level he can cast, but he can freely cast any spell on the warmage spell list until he reaches that limit. So he doesn't have to guess ahead of time which spells to prepare -- if he needs to cast a particular spell several times in the same day, he can do so.
- **Winning Ways:** A warmage needs to have a high Charisma score because that ability governs his spellcasting. But a high Charisma score also gives him an edge in negotiations, helping him make inquiries, interrogate prisoners, and negotiate with anyone he can manage to talk to. Sometimes talking proves more effective than fighting, even for a warmage.
- **Good Will Saves:** A warmage uses the best save progression in the game for Will saves (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). This natural mental strength helps him resist most effects that fool his mind or assault his spirit, including charms, compulsions, illusions, fear effects, and even *inflict* spells.
- **Fair Weapon Selection:** The warmage is proficient only with simple weaponry. Though simple weapons aren't the most deadly ones available, the fact that the warmage has access to the whole category gives



him more options than most other arcane spellcasters have. That versatility can be a lifesaver if his spells happen to fail him.

- **Warmage Edge:** A warmage adds his Intelligence bonus to the damage he deals with spells (see the class description for details).
- **Advanced Learning:** At 3rd, 6th, 11th, and 16th level, a warmage can add a new wizard spell of his choice from the Evocation school to his warmage spell list (see Spells, above). This ability allows him more flexibility by granting access to spells such as *Tenser's floating disc*, *Leomund's tiny hut*, and *wall of force*.
- **Bonus Feats:** At 7th, 10th, 15th, and 20th level, a warmage gains a bonus metamagic feat that makes the spells he casts more potent in some fashion.

Warmage Weaknesses

The warmage's free access to attack spells and other advantages come at a price. Below are a few of the disadvantages you should keep in mind if you're considering a warmage character.

- **Mediocre Hit Points:** The warmage's 6-sided Hit Dice give him more hit points than most arcane spellcasters have, but not enough to withstand really heavy punishment.
- **Mediocre Skill Points:** At a mere 2 skill points per level, most warmages don't accumulate many skill ranks, even with quadruple skill points at 1st level. Still, the typical warmage builds up his Intelligence score so that he can take advantage of the warmage edge class feature, and a high Intelligence modifier improves his skill points somewhat.
- **Mediocre Armor Class:** At 1st level, a warmage is proficient with light armor, light shields, and bucklers. He ignores arcane spell failure chances when using any of these items. At 8th level, he gains proficiency with medium armor and can ignore the arcane spell failure chance when using it, with or without a light shield or buckler. This limited ability to use armor gives the warmage a better Armor Class than most arcane spellcasters have, though his AC still isn't great.
- **Poor Attack Bonus:** A warmage's base attack bonus is +1 per two warmage levels, which is the worst in the game. Warmages can dish out lots of damage with their spells, but they don't do well with weapons.
- **Poor Reflex and Fortitude Saving Throws:** Warmages have the worst progression for Fortitude and Reflex saves in the game (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). Thus, they aren't so great at avoiding attacks on their bodies.
- **Limited Spell Choices:** The warmage can cast spells from the warmage spell list, and only from that list. The advanced learning class feature allows him to make a few additions to the list and personalize it somewhat, but for the most part, he is stuck with the spells that his class list offers. The warmage list is great for deadly combat, but it isn't much good for other purposes.

Playing a Classy Warmage

You'll find life as a warmage much easier to bear if you keep the following tips in mind.

Think Ahead

Just because you don't have to choose spells every day doesn't mean you don't have any thinking to do before a

battle begins. Many of your spells cover areas and can damage your allies just as readily as your foes, so work with your friends to ensure that they either stay out of the areas you're blasting or can get out quickly.

You have enough hit points and Armor Class to withstand a short stint in the front rank, where you can usually count on a clear line of fire -- which is pretty important for line, cone, and ranged touch attacks. But you can't handle front-line combat all day, so you're better off walking near the middle of the party's marching order most of the time and moving toward the action when a fight begins. Make sure your allies leave you enough space to stand and cast.

Spells aren't the only tools you have at your disposal. A few weapons, alchemical items, and other pieces of equipment can greatly expand your options, especially when you're facing a situation in which you either can't use your spells or they prove ineffective.

Remember Your Friends

Beware of getting too aggressive, especially when doing so involves dragging your allies into fights they'd rather avoid. You're an attack machine, but fighting isn't always the best option. So learn to tell when blasting away with spells isn't the best approach, and be prepared to either handle the situation some other way or simply step back and let your allies deal with it.

The Party's Front Line: Your party's more heavily armored individuals (particularly fighters and paladins) share your zest for a fight. But because they prefer melee combat, they tend to get in your way when you start tossing spells. So work with these characters ahead of time to limit their exposure to your spells. You and the other front-line folk might want to divide the battlefield into halves (for example, a left half and a right half), or you could simply work out a set of signals to alert your comrades that it's time to clear your line of fire.

Since you don't have unlimited spells, you need to leave some foes to the fighting types. However, you should always be ready to strike quickly when they get bogged down or get drawn into a confrontation they can't handle.

Party Scouts: Good tactics require good information. Characters such as rogues, monks, and rangers can give you advance warning of the challenges that lie ahead. But in a fight, these characters like to lurk on the fringes, looking for opportunities to use their particular skills. Try not to hurt the scout with your spells, and pay attention to what she's doing, since she may need support in a hurry.

Other Spellcasters: You probably aren't the only spellcaster in your party, but your spell selection is uniquely focused on combat. If your party needs support spells, such as *detect magic*, or spells for transport or personal enhancement, some other spellcaster will have to supply them. Make sure the other spellcasters in your party are aware of your limitations, but don't expect them to let you have all the fun blasting the opposition. Instead, work out ways to coordinate your attack spells. Perhaps you and another spellcaster can work together to blanket the opposition with area spells, or perhaps one of you can use area spells while the other uses targeted spells to take out the enemy leaders or pick off cripples.

Some Key Equipment

Your spells are more important to you than your equipment, but a few pieces of the right gear can make your career longer and happier.

- **Melee Weapon:** You're not much good in melee, but you never know when you'll have to resort to hand-to-

hand combat. Thus, you should carry a good melee weapon so that you're not defenseless when your spells run out or fail. A spear deals good damage and can also prove useful in probing surfaces for unseen dangers. A longspear has reach and can help keep foes a little farther away from you.

- **Armor:** Buy the best light armor you can afford. At the beginning of your career, you probably can't afford more than studded leather and a buckler or light shield, but move up to a chain shirt as soon as you can. When you gain the ability to wear medium armor at 8th level, you'll probably want to get a breastplate, though you might still want to stick to your chain shirt to maintain your speed.

You need all the Armor Class you can get, so add other defensive items, such as *rings of protection* and *amulets of natural armor*, whenever you can afford them. Keep in mind that several lesser items whose bonuses stack give you better protection at a cheaper price than one big item does.

- **Ranged Weapon:** A crossbow can prove as effective as a low-level attack spell against some opponents. Use it when necessary to conserve your spells, or when the opposition isn't threatening enough to merit their use. You can use either a heavy or a light crossbow, as you choose. The former deals more damage but takes longer to reload. At the beginning of your career, the light crossbow might prove a better choice than the heavy one because you're more likely to find yourself out of other options. But as you gain experience (and money for better equipment), you might prefer to deal more damage with a single shot.
- **Backup Spells:** You never know when you'll run out of spells. Furthermore, you never know when you'll need a particular spell -- and need it very badly. So it pays to keep some spellcasting power in reserve via a collection of scrolls, wands, or both. However, your limited spell list strictly limits the scrolls and wands you can use. So pick out a flexible spell, such as one of the orb spells or *scorching ray* (which you can use to either attack a creature or damage an object) and carry it on a scroll or in a wand, depending on what you can afford.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies, and he served as the Sage of **Dragon** Magazine for eighteen years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not his friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

Based on the original **Dungeons & Dragons®** game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and on the new edition of the **Dungeons & Dragons** game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison. **D&D**, **Dungeons & Dragons**, and **Forgotten Realms** are registered trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All Wizards characters, character names, and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This material is protected under the laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction of or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, places, or events is purely coincidental. This Wizards of the Coast game product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without written permission. To learn more about the Open Gaming License and the d20 System License, please visit **www.wizards.com/d20**. ©2001-2005 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved. Made in the U.S.A.

Visit our website at www.wizards.com/dnd